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ABSTRACT

Federal aid to education in 1970 has increased to four billion dollars and as a result, the number and size of programs has increased , too. More than a rise in expenditure, however, is needed. The most economical way of providing a good education for all must be found. The Federal government looks to individual states and communities for leadership in deciding and implementing school programs. But it also conducts research on education engineering, experiments with performance contracts, develops better methods of dissemination of educational information, and implements developments in instructional technology, such as television and computer assisted programs. (JW)

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THE NEW LOOK OF FEDERAL AID TO EDUCATION*

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Since these are serious times, I have asked that no bonfires be lit, fireworks scheduled, or commemorative medals struck. In fact, since the press unaccountably failed to cover the event, you are the first to know that yesterday I celebrated my centennial. I have been Acting U.S. Commissioner of Education for exactly 100 days. I don't want to give you the impression that I have been marking them off on the walls of my office. It's just that I didn't expect such a long run in the part.

If you are asking yourselves if 100 days comprise a sufficient length of time in which to become profound on the subject of the Federal Government's role in education, I want to hasten to reassure you on that score: I've actually been at the Office of Education a total of 163 days.

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In all seriousness, I admit that my exposure to one of the most massive and complex domestic programs ever undertaken has been brief. Yet it has been time enough to persuade me that compared with some of its recent history Federal aid to education has taken a new and very hopeful turning. It has a new look, particularly with regard to your interests in the States and localities. I am convinced that new initiatives have been adopted and new policies shaped that will enable

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*Before the annual convention banquet of the Michigan Association of School Boards, Civic Auditorium, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 6:30 p.m., Thursday, September 24, 1970.

us to build and operate a far more cooperative and effective partnership, a partnership based on a solid understanding of our mutual interests and shared objectives.

I must admit that when I arrived in Washington last April I was not quite so optimistic. The 1960's had witnessed intensive Federal involvement with all levels of education for the first time in our history. The Office of Education had grown prodigiously; in budget, from less than $500 million to $4 billion; in programs, from 15 or so to approximately 100. Many of these were crash efforts to pour literally billions of dollars into the schools. The schools in so many instances were almost comically unprepared for the sudden largesse.

Federal aid seemed to me to present the classic image of the man leaping on his horse and galloping madly off in all directions. The problems of education had been building for generations. The Federal solutions to those problems were conceived and executed in a matter of months. Much was accomplished, of course; Americans, particularly those Americans isolated in their good fortune from the problems of their less happy countrymen, became fully aware for the first time of the vital need for educational reform throughout the Nation. Yet the Federal actions to achieve reform were often blunted because they were undertaken in a rather profound ignorance of local conditions, local attitudes, and local preferences.

The results of this flurry of activity, it becomes clearer every day, have been sadly disproportionate to the amount of the investment. A lesson that had begun to emerge long before I arrived on the scene is

reaffirmed and strengthened by each new study: money alone is not enough; money, even when accompanied by high-decibel rhetoric, will be wasted if it is not also accompanied by understanding and planning; money, simply stated, can't buy a good education system in the United States.

There is probably no solution to the school problem that will not cost large sums of money. But a checkbook is not an adequate substitute for the proper methods. There is little to be gained by spending unless we spend in a way that will produce tangible results.

And, if there is one word that characterizes the new look of Federal aid to education, it is that word -- <u>results</u>. Washington is no longer pursuing expensive will-o-the-wisps with no regard for what happens as a consequence. We are no longer equating success with increased expenditures. We want to be sure that every dollar invested in an educational program will produce a payoff for the people of this country, particularly the children, that can be measured and that can be proved.

We now seek, as President Nixon said in his Message on Education Reform, a thoughtful redirection of the Federal effort to help achieve a genuine reform of the entire educational enterprise in America. The President spoke in that message of the need to strengthen State and local initiatives. He said -- and I quote -- "I am determined to see to it that the flow of power in education goes toward, and not away from, the local community. The diversity and freedom of education in this nation, founded on local administration and State responsibility, must prevail."

In other words, Washington has abandoned, forever I hope, the parochial notion that wisdom flowers only on the banks of the Potomac. I can assure you that Washington bureaucrats now realize that there is wisdom in Grand Rapids and throughout the State of Michigan. That there is wisdom in every State and community in America and our children deserve the benefit of all of it. Our children deserve -- and the people are demanding more vocally every day -- schools that produce results. They deserve schools that are, as your convention theme states, accountable for their performance.

Program Reform

The Office of Education is exploring several ways in which we can help you get performance for your educational system. We are giving a great deal of attention to ways in which our programs can be redesigned for greater utility and effectiveness. For, in terms of accountability, the Federal aid effort has apparently operated as much in the dark as the schools themselves. Many of our programs simply haven't worked as well as had been anticipated. Or if these programs have succeeded in accomplishing what their authors intended, we do not have the information we need to measure their effects.

We know, for example, that 10 percent of Title I funds have been spent in life support (hot lunches and so on), 70 percent in improving reading, and another 8 percent in attempts to improve leadership. That means that 88 cents out of every Title I dollar have gone into programs that can be objectively evaluated and assessed. Yet our evaluative techniques need much improvement if we are to gauge the true cost effectiveness of this program, the largest in the Office of Education.

We believe our studies will enable us to achieve immediate and substantial improvement in the program at the Federal, State, and local levels. This is of a high order of importance if we are to take advantage of Title I's early gains. Because there is no question in my mind that Title I -- whatever its faults -- has given the Nation's educational system an awareness and a know-how that can make a significant and continuing difference to our eight million disadvantaged children.

Research

Accountability is, as you have been discussing for the last three days, a very promising concept. No longer can we be satisfied with traditional standards of measurement -- the number of teachers, or books, or trombones. We must search for the proper combination of all factors so that we can guarantee that our children will leave high school well equipped for higher education, jobs, and the general business of living itself.

We can no longer hold the student wholly responsible for success or failure, sharing the credit for his success while completely escaping all blame for his failure. Rather our schools must assume as Governor Russell Peterson of Delaware has rightly said, a commitment as simple as it is just: that every child shall learn.

The Office of Education is supporting a broad variety of research and development activities designed to help make accountability an operating principle of American schools.

We are supporting the National Assessment of Education being conducted by the Education Commission of the States under the

chairmanship of Governor Peterson. We hope Assessment will provide an understandable reliable national measuring device in the major subject areas against which all schools can measure their performance.

A good share of our research effort is being devoted to the development of concepts such as education engineering. This is the name given the whole system of interrelated techniques which may be used to make an educational system accountable for student learning as well as the use of money, manpower, and equipment.

Performance Contracts

We are also exploring the use of performance contracts in the schools to help achieve accountability. This is a new concept to the Office of Education though it is familiar to business-oriented agencies such as the Department of Defense. The school buys student achievement rather than books or teaching techniques. It is up to the contractor to do the job, using the methods and technology that seem best suited to the particular situation. Since the contractors are accountable for results, they recover no costs if they fail to meet minimum standards of student performance.

Although a number of firms are active in this field and more are asking to come in all the time, we are convinced in the Office of Education that if performance contracts prove workable and useful in public education, the school systems themselves should function as the contracting agents. The profit motive will have a particular attraction for our underpaid teachers. Given the proper incentives, I know that our teachers will be more than willing to put in extra time in an effort to accomplish extraordinary results. The Office of

Education has been supporting, in preliminary experiments, the use of performance contracts in a number of school districts. Initial results are encouraging though we should be aware that performance contracting is a complex business, difficult to integrate into a traditional system and difficult to measure for results. But it does bring a healthy degree of market competition and cost effectiveness into education. And it does focus instruction on the student because, in the final analysis, it is the student's achievement that determines who gets paid and how much. Performance contracting also places the schools in the advantageous position of searching the market for what will be the most effective instructional system in each individual case, rather than being forced to stay with programs that have been demonstrated to be inadequate.

Information Dissemination

The Office of Education is, in short, working to help the school systems find out what works. We are examining a whole series of concepts that are new to education including producer-consumer schools, renewal capital, comprehensive planning, educational accomplishment auditing, and many more.

But in addition to development of new ideas, we are also very concerned with the transportation of new ideas, their dissemination throughout the entire educational system. The goal of all Federally supported education experiments is the same: improving the quality of American education. Obviously not all are successful, but many are. But we do not intend to strengthen scattered target areas only. Pilot efforts demonstrated to be successful new classroom practice can and

must be applied in other localities and regions if Federal aid to education is to reach its full potential for effecting permanent improvement.

Multiplying the good effect of the best programs demands dissemination. Educators constantly speak of the need for information on exemplary programs -- where they are, how they operate, the results they have achieved. We are attempting to meet that need through our newly established National Center for Educational Communication. This organization is intended to link together information of all types, from pure research through concrete program results, to be able by various techniques to retrieve this information rapidly and make it available widely.

Instructional Technology

Productivity is a core issue for American education today. The cost of schooling is increasing at a rate far exceeding the growth of our ability to pay for it. Over the past 20 years enrollment in the public schools has gone up slightly more than 80 percent; school revenues during the same period increased some 350 percent in price-adjusted dollars.

Instructional technology offers the best hope for meeting this crisis in cost. Television, in particular, multiplies an educational program's impact many times -- upon a school, or a community, or, indeed, an entire Nation. Witness the amazing Sesame Street. This television production is one of the best investments of research money ever made by the Office of Education and the other organizations funding it. Sesame Street reaches an estimated six million youngsters between the

ages of three and five. Preliminary studies show that the impact of Sesame Street on disadvantaged children, the prime target audience, is impressive. The first formal evaluation, made in January of this year, showed that children watching the show gained in their ability to recognize letters and simple geometric forms at a rate two and one half times that of nonviewers.

We're all addicted to the use of initials these days but I would like to call your attention to three letters -- CAI -- which we feel have great potential for education. They stand for Computer Assisted Instruction, a technique being developed with funds by our National Center for Educational Research and by Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. CAI is vital to the use of three more letters -- IPI -- Individually Prescribed Instruction. Both systems tailor instruction to a child's individual needs, rather than forcing him into one common mold. Like television, CAI has long-range impact. A computer at Stanford University, for example, provides drills in reading and math to children seated in Kentucky and Mississippi, half a continent away.

My point is this: we in education are at long last becoming aware of the marvelous potential of technology for educational purposes, both in the school and outside the school. These new tools and techniques can literally revolutionize our ability to instruct millions of American youngsters in an effective and interesting way. The methods exist; the problem we face now is putting them to immediate and widespread use.

In closing, let me say that I believe American education is busy in this decade of the 1970's building a new tradition. It is a tradition

made up of efficiency, adaptation, and participation. Perhaps you could call it a businesslike tradition. We want to find out what works in education; we want to find the solutions to our problems; we want to give our children the educational preparation they must have to build their own lives and to contribute effectively to the progress of this great country.

The people in Washington are through arguing, I believe, about territorial rights, contending about the Federal share of educational responsibility, or the State share, or the local share. Since all of us benefit from the quality and effectiveness of our schools, all of us share the responsibility of helping each other, of using the resources each of us possesses to augment the resources of the others, and being accountable for results.

That's the way it looks to me from Washington. And I think it's an excellent perspective.

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